

# S-1 explains Army awards

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The Fires Brigade S-1 office continues to work hard while supporting the Fires Brigade Soldiers. One of the areas that we are currently focusing on is the preparation and processing of awards. The four most common awards that our Soldiers are eligible to receive are: The Bronze Star Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Commendation Medal and the Iraqi Campaign Medal.

The Bronze Star Medal is a combat award that is awarded to any person who, while serving in any capacity in or with the Army of the United States, distinguished himself or herself by heroic or meritorious achievement or service, while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party.

The Meritorious Service Medal is awarded to any member of the Armed Forces of the United States who, while serving in a non-combat area, has distinguished himself or herself by outstanding meritorious achievement or service. Effective Sept. 11, 2001, however, the MSM may be awarded in the combat theater, for non-combat meritorious achievement or service.

The Army Commendation Medal (ARCOM) is awarded to any member of the Armed Forces of the United States who, while serving in any capacity with the Army, distinguishes himself or herself by heroism, meritorious achievement or meritorious service. Awards of the ARCOM may be for acts of valor performed under circumstances described above which are of lesser degree than required for award of the Bronze Star Medal or Meritorious Service Medal.

The Iraqi Campaign Medal is awarded to Soldiers who deploy to Iraq in direct support of Operation Iraqi Freedom on or after March 19, 2003 to a date to be determined or the cessation of OIF. The area of eligibility encompasses all land area of the country of Iraq. To be eligible for the award, a Soldier must be assigned to a unit participating in OIF for 30 consecutive days.

In addition to individual awards, the Fires Brigade is eligible for two distinguished unit awards: the Iraqi Campaign Participation Streamer and the Meritorious Unit Commendation.

Army units will be deemed to have participated in combat if they actually engaged the enemy in combat, if they were stationed in a designated combat zone, or if they performed duties either in the air or on the ground in any part of the combat zone at any time during the designated period of the respective battle, campaign, or expedition. On Oct. 21, 2005, the Secretary of the Army authorized award of campaign participation credit to eligible U.S. Army units that are serving in the theater of operations in support of the Global War on Terrorism. Units awarded campaign participation credit will display a streamer embroidered with the word Iraq.

The Meritorious Unit Commendation is awarded to units for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services for at least six continuous months during the period of military operations against an armed enemy. Service in a combat zone is not required, but must be directly related to the combat effort.

All Fires Brigade Soldiers, if eligible, can expect to come home with a medal.